

Rail*Trains*Ecology*Cycling
Building Community through Bicycling and Commuter Rail

February 23, 2009

The Honorable Donald DeFronzo, Co-Chair, Transportation Committee
The Honorable Antonio Guerrara, Co-Chair, Transportation Committee
Connecticut General Assembly
CJ Strand, Transportation Clerk
CJ.Strand@cga.ct.gov

Dear Transportation Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of Rail*Trains*Ecology*Cycling (RailTEC) to express support for Proposed Bill H.B. 6072: "An Act Permitting Passengers Boarding Trains to Take Bicycles onto Such Trains."

Proposed Bill H.B. 6072 addresses the goal of attaining discriminatory free access to trains for bicycle commuters and their bicycles, whether bicycle commuter cycles to work during peak hours (when the majority of workers travel to work) or in the off peak period.

RailTEC and bicycle advocacy groups, such as Elm City Cycling and Connecticut Bicycle Coalition, appreciate your efforts to redress inequities, which negatively impact bicycle commuters' access to trains. We reached out to the Connecticut Rail Commuter Council for support, but unfortunately have been repeatedly rebuffed. That said, we address concerns raised in the Council's annual report.

In mass transit, all of the pieces matter. The Connecticut Rail Commuter Council's 2008 report, which addresses, among other things, two key issues. One: a valid concern about ridership decreases due to job losses in New York City, and two: the pressure on several train stations to find enough parking spaces for motor vehicles. Allowing bicycle commuters on trains addresses both issues at little or no taxpayer cost.

From page 6 of the Council's report: "The fear is if ridership decreases there may be pressure for further fare increases." Giving people a 'choice of yeses' when it comes to the use of mass transit may be a way to counteract a potential decrease in ridership and defuse pressure to increase fares.

On page 7 of the Council's report, the authors commented on the loss of parking at Stamford's deteriorating garage by wondering "how we can get new passengers on those trains without additional parking or shuttles from satellite lots." Just one bicycle commuter on a train means one less car a parking facility needs to worry about, not to mention one less car on an already-busy street. I drive to the Stamford station every day and can testify not only to the pressure the garage is under, but the pressure on the roads leading up to the station. Mass transit cannot be effective if roads and parking facilities have to be stressed beyond their limits to make mass transit work.

Paradoxically, the Council itself has taken a position against bicycle commuters. However, their chief argument – which is that all ticketed passengers should have a seat first – has seemingly been made without regard to the two key issues of possible ridership decreases and demands on parking infrastructure. The few square feet of space a bicycle commuter takes up on a train is nothing compared to the 160 plus square feet one car occupies in one parking spot.

Tying these issues together, The Final Report of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainability and the MTA recommends that the MTA "promote and facilitate bike transport on trains and buses" to "facilitate the use of bicycles as a part of MTA passengers' travel from point of origin to point of final destination." Providing flexibility for today's commuter, which decreases dependence on costly automotive infrastructure, is necessary if mass transit is to remain relevant, inexpensive, and true to its mission.

Sincerely,

Michael K. Norris, representing Rail*Trains*Ecology*Cycling

<http://www.railtec.org>

Rail overhaul, investment vital to Northeast Corridor and nation

Richard Stowe is founder and director of Rail*Trains*Ecology*Cycling, a nonprofit advocacy group

Home to 56.3 million people, the nation's capital, and powerful financial, media and academic institutions, the Northeast region produces 20 percent of America's GDP and 27 million jobs, but is only 2 percent of the nation's landmass.

The mega-sprawlopolis is most clearly defined by the intensity of its sky glow at night, light pollution symbolic of the profligate energy consumed by short-haul flights and millions of automobiles.

Amtrak owns and operates the Northeast Corridor from Washington to Boston. The energy-efficient electrified corridor generates half of Amtrak's riders nationwide and serves 80 percent of America's commuter-rail passengers.

In all, 540,000 passengers travel daily on Long Island Railroad (LIRR) and Metro-North Railroad (MNR) from suburban region-to-city center (including reverse commute); 440,000 passengers board seven other commuter-rail lines daily.

Amtrak, which carries 32,000 passengers daily, accounts for 50 percent of corridor train miles and 10 percent of corridor trips.

Therein lies the paradox: Amtrak, a quasi-private corporation, owns and operates all but 15 percent of track miles on the Northeast Corridor without transparency, public accountability, or a dedicated funding stream, but generates only 4 percent of Northeast Corridor riders.

Over its 37-year history, Amtrak has been the recipient of declining rates of congressional subsidies, increasing politicization, and no aggressive growth strategy plan.

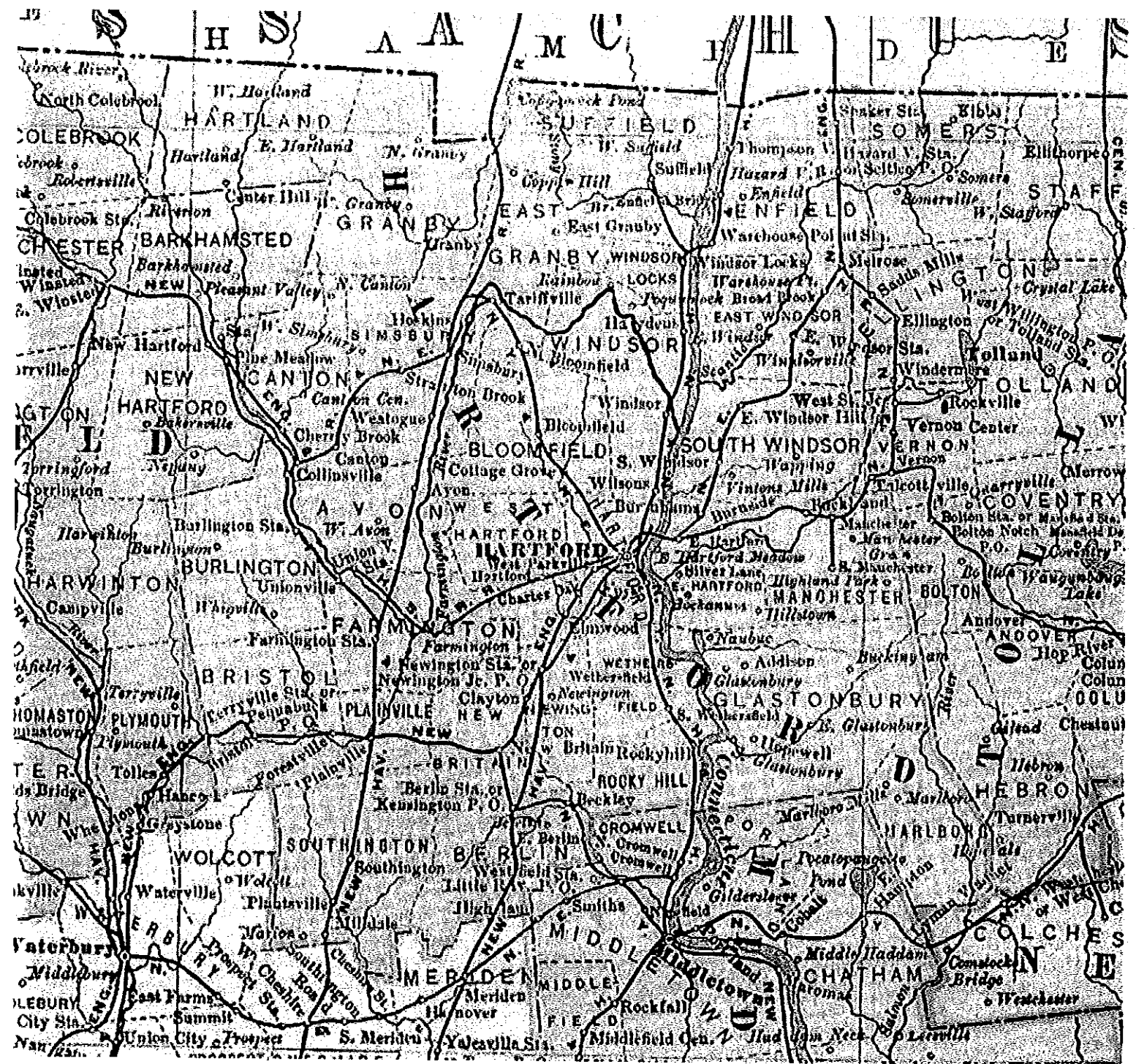
In this vacuum of vision, local rail agency fiefdoms engage in poor planning, Amtrak provides compromised service, expansion of commuter-rail service is stymied, and rail freight movements into New York and New England are thwarted.

That calls for a transfer of ownership, oversight and management of the Northeast Corridor coupled with a sound strategic vision that focuses on Amtrak's strengths, commuter-rail growth, and rail freight shipments through the Trans-Hudson Express tunnels.

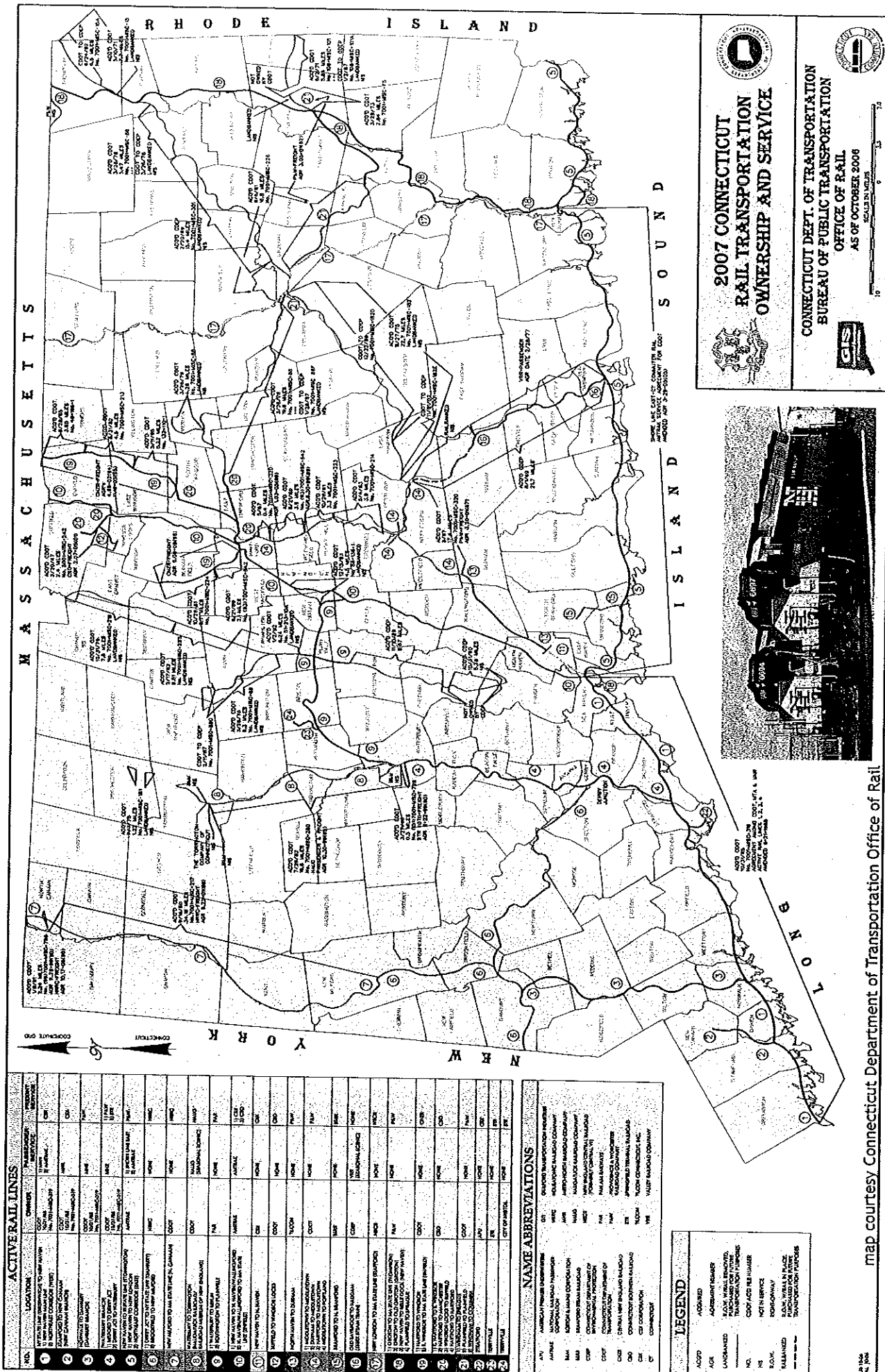
To achieve that: Transfer ownership of track, infrastructure and right-of-way to the eight corridor states - Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts - and the District of Columbia. Management should operate under a joint power authority and include regional stakeholders such as Amtrak, commuter-rail operators, state governments, District of Columbia, rail freight carriers, and members of the public. The authority would establish a corridor master plan; oversee procurement and operation contracts, which conform to and exceed the highest green standards; set policy (provide bicycle parking on trains) and monitor measurable goals.

Providing four-city Acela Express service (Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington) without 15-minute Penn Station layovers, low-cost New Haven-originated commuter trains running nonstop or one-stop from Penn Station to Washington, and express commuter-train service from Philadelphia International Airport to Penn Station would allow a much-needed shift from congestion-choking and delay-inducing short-haul air trips to fast, high-speed rail trips.

Rail investment helps reduce oil imports, global warming, overcrowded skies and traffic-related deaths. A vibrant Northeast Corridor is critical to our national interest.



Rail*Trans*Ecology*Cycling



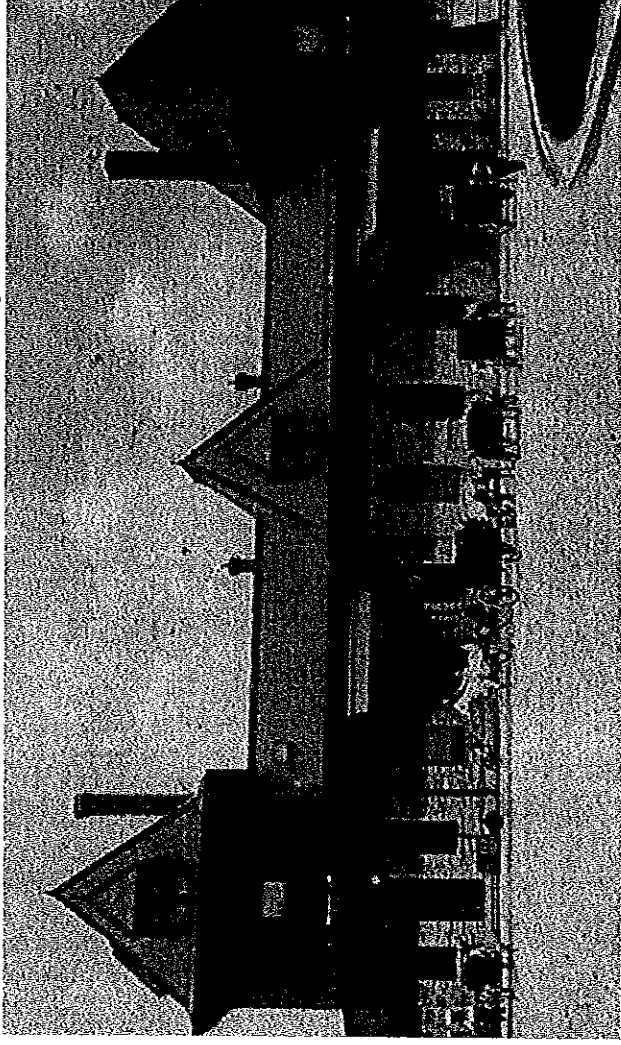
map courtesy Connecticut Department of Transportation Office of Rail

Brewster(s) to Hartford Timetable - New York & New England Railroad - June 29, 1884

NEW YORK & NEW ENGLAND RAILROAD.—Western Division.													
K Hornbrook, Div. Supt., Hartford.													
[June 20, 1884.]													
Hartford to Brewsters.							Brewsters to Hartford.						
Day	Time	PM	PM	PM	PM	PM	Day	Time	PM	PM	PM	PM	PM
1	11:14	8:30	8:40	8:50	9:00	9:10	1	11:51	11:55	12:00	12:05	12:10	12:15
2	11:19	8:35	8:45	8:55	9:05	9:15	2	11:56	12:00	12:05	12:10	12:15	12:20
3	11:24	8:40	8:50	9:00	9:10	9:20	3	12:01	12:05	12:10	12:15	12:20	12:25
4	11:29	8:45	8:55	9:05	9:15	9:25	4	12:06	12:10	12:15	12:20	12:25	12:30
5	11:34	8:50	9:00	9:10	9:20	9:30	5	12:11	12:15	12:20	12:25	12:30	12:35
6	11:39	8:55	9:05	9:15	9:25	9:35	6	12:16	12:20	12:25	12:30	12:35	12:40
7	11:44	9:00	9:10	9:20	9:30	9:40	7	12:21	12:25	12:30	12:35	12:40	12:45
8	11:49	9:05	9:15	9:25	9:35	9:45	8	12:26	12:30	12:35	12:40	12:45	12:50
9	11:54	9:10	9:20	9:30	9:40	9:50	9	12:31	12:35	12:40	12:45	12:50	12:55
10	11:59	9:15	9:25	9:35	9:45	9:55	10	12:36	12:40	12:45	12:50	12:55	13:00
11	12:04	9:20	9:30	9:40	9:50	10:00	11	12:41	12:45	12:50	12:55	13:00	13:05
12	12:09	9:25	9:35	9:45	9:55	10:05	12	12:46	12:50	12:55	13:00	13:05	13:10
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New Britain & Forestville Stations - Waterbury-Hartford Commuter Rail



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